

Terms of Reference for National and International External Collaborators

Developing a roadmap for the Government of Iraq to launch a national public works programme

ILO Iraq, January 2024

A. Background

Reconstruction and public works context of Iraq

Four decades of conflict devastated Iraq's economy resulting in the destruction of infrastructure, deindustrialization, high unemployment and emigration. Since 2017 the country has experienced a period of relative stability that has enabled it to capitalize on oil exports and kickstart an incipient process of reconstruction and economic diversification. Nevertheless, unemployment and work informality remain high. In total 1,703,000 people (16.5 per cent of the working age population) are unemployed, with a higher rate among men and in urban areas.¹ Labour underutilization also remains high. The combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force² is estimated at 24.1 per cent in 2021, with LU3 rate for women that year was a staggering 46.9 per cent, compared to 19.7 per cent for men. As of 2021, approximately 5.73 million people were informally employed, making up 66.6% of total employment.

The Government of Iraq has signaled that the creation and roll-out of a national public work programme is a development priority. In a recent White Paper on Economic Reform, the Government highlighted its ambition to "create a legal and regulatory framework to operationalize public works programmes".³ Public works are seen as a means of creating sustainable employment opportunities for low-income households with low wages or unemployed, and as a way of contributing to local development and infrastructure rehabilitation through small, locally defined projects. The Iraq Vision for Sustainable Development 2030,⁴ prepared in 2019 by the Ministry of Planning also identified the establishment of public works as one of Iraq's key investment pillars to create job opportunities in the immediate term. In November 2022, the Government under its National Development Programme stated its interest to prioritize investment in a National Public Works Programme with a possible focus on the housing and construction sector. An employment intensive public works programme is also seen as an opportunity for the Government to transcend ad-hoc income support and livelihoods creation initiatives (e.g. cash for work sector dominated by non-government organizations) towards more sustainable policy-backed job-creation and employment promotion in both the private and public sectors. It will also assist in formalizing the economy and enabling extension of social security coverage in the private sector thanks to a recently passed social security and pensions law.

Strategic design parameters for public work programmes

While public works programmes can sustainably transform the economy and reduce poverty, they can also fail as a result of elite capture and corruption. The design of public works programmes is therefore

¹ [Iraq Labour Force Survey, 2021](#)

² The LU3 indicator may be thought of as a broadened unemployment rate inasmuch as it includes both the unemployed and the potential labour force (comprised of those who would like to work but for one reason or other are not actively looking).

³ Second axis on macroeconomic reform and employment creation (Government of Iraq, 2020: p. 62)

⁴ [Iraq Vision 2030](#)

of critical importance. To avoid such failures in the Iraq context, several strategic design parameters have to be factored in from the very beginning including: (1) the ratio of material costs versus labour costs, (2) the shelf of works, (3) the governance of the prioritization and contracting, (4) competency of staffing and other accountability mechanisms and (5) the potential of public works to strengthen human capital, support skilling in emerging sectors and translate into more and better jobs, especially for the poor, vulnerable and those at risk of being left behind, including through the established coherence and coordination with other existing socio-economic policies and programmes, particularly on social security. The ratio of material costs versus labour costs is important because the more the material costs are high, the more vulnerability to corruption and misuse increases. While in some cases material costs may need to be high (e.g. clearing land-slides with excavators), it is important to strive towards a higher labour ratio if the main objective of the programme is indeed to create jobs. The shelf of works is of strategic importance because it determines the public value and economic and environmental spin-offs of infrastructure being constructed. For example, the construction of a house benefits one household while water conservation infrastructure in rain fed areas can strengthen an entire local ecosystem, boost agriculture and food systems, indirectly create even more jobs, promote human-centered growth and green-intensive employment, thus facilitating transition to the green economy. The governance of prioritization and contracting is important to ensure bottom-up participative and democratic ownership of public work choices. The competency of staff managing the implementation of public work programmes can make or break the entire endeavor. Moreover, checks and balances need to be maintained in the delivery of works to ensure accountability. For example, as demonstrated in India National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), information management systems including GIS tracking can help monitor public work programmes in real time. Finally public work programmes, if well designed can contribute to expand skill sets in emerging sectors,

Costing is another important parameter that needs to be taken into account. ILO has already prepared the groundwork and costed out the resources needed to implement such a programme in Iraq.⁵ Finally, given the staggering low female labour force participation rate (10.6 per cent) and exceptionally high aggregated female labour force underutilization⁶ (46.9 per cent) in Iraq, it would be important that a National Public Works Programme proposes specific mechanisms to employ women. Integration of maternity protection provisions of a recently passed Social Security and Pensions Law, as well as establishing stronger linkages with complementary services (e.g. skills development, employment support, care services) could become such mechanisms. Investment in care infrastructure (creches), social services can further incentivize women's employment.

International good practices and lessons learned that may be relevant to Iraq

At the global level, there is a wide range of experiences and lessons learned in designing and implementing public work programmes. Examples that maybe relevant to Iraq include the [National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(NREGA\)](#) in India which adopts an employment guarantee approach by legally enforcing the right to employment. It is a bottom-up, people-centered, demand-driven, self-selecting rights-based programme. As of April 2021, it had approximately 290 million registered program beneficiaries (job card holders) with about 140 million active workers at any given time. Another example that is relevant to Iraq is South Africa's [Expanded Public Works Programme](#). The

⁵ [Adopting Public Works in Iraq: Key Design Considerations for an Effective Programme, ILO 2022](#)

⁶ The LU4 indicator is a composite measure of labour underutilization as it includes combines unemployment, time-related underemployment and potential labour force (comprised of those who would like to work but for one reason or other are not actively looking).

programme focused on job creation in infrastructure, social service and environmental projects. It has created more than 8 million jobs. A common characteristic that Iraq shares with South Africa when the programme was launched there is the large size of its informal economy, urbanized settlements and an important focus on the construction sector.

With regards to integrating social security and other existing social and labour market services in the national public work programme, another South Africa's initiative could be of a particular relevance. The [Working for Water programme](#) provides mandatory training in work-related skills and occupational safety and health. It also guarantees essential maternity protection and access to childcare facilities for female participants. [Paraguay's Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change \(PROEZA\)](#) project could become another inspirational case for linking public works with existing social protection initiatives in the country.

For more examples that inspire further South- South Cooperation with Iraq, [see ILO webpage on public employment programmes](#).

This consultancy represents an important stream of work for ILO's Decent Work Country Programme in Iraq over the next three years. The initiative will be implemented as part of ILO Iraq's EU funded Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) Programme.

B. Objective and task description of consultancy

The ILO seeks to hire a national and international collaborator to support the national entities' efforts in drafting and launching a National Public Works Programme. In particular, the following tasks are foreseen:

1. **Support a National Consultation Workshop** with constituents and stakeholders on the relevance of a Public Works or Public Employment Programme for Iraq (tentative date: 4 March 2024).
2. **Desk review of legal and administrative framework for a National Public Works Programme.** This will include reviewing available statistics of the Ministry of Planning, reviewing the Iraq federal budget for the years 2023-2025 as well as national instructions relating to the public works and contracting according to Iraq Civil law. Consultants will identify regulations and procedures that need to be developed to support the legal and administrative framework for public works leading to the establishing the National Public Works Programme.
3. **Organize three national consultations, and regional / sectorial focus group discussions** with different stakeholders including the Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance (MoLSA), the Ministry of Housing , the National Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH), Unions, Employers federations (the federation of contractors , the Iraq Federation of Industries (IFI) , and the Iraq Chamber of Commerce), the Iraqi Bar Association, the National Board of Investment, the Ministry of Planning, Iraqi Universities, and the Iraqi Engineers Unions. Consultations should identify priority sectors, shelf of works and other strategic priorities of a National Public Works Programme in selected Governorates. Following consultations, the consultants will prepare a first draft of the Comprehensive Report recommending sectors to focus on, shelf of works, material and labour cost ratios for different types of works, governance of prioritization and contracting, draft organigramme including potential linkages with other existing and relevant services and programmes, particularly social security and care services, and operational guidance note of programme.

4. **Support establishment of a National Public Works Programme Design Committee** including main ILO constituents. Consultants will draft terms of reference to support the committees work, identify and propose agenda items, and prepare other committee documentation.
5. **Support the organization of a study visit abroad** for the Public Works Programme Design Committee and key Government decision makers. The international consultant will liaise with key stakeholders in country to be visited and prepare the study programme. The consultants will submit a study visit report.
6. **Organize an official launch** of the National Public Works Programme. Consultants will present: (1) the work of the design committee meetings, (2) a Study Visit Report, (3) the draft Final Report, and (4) draft Regulations and instructions.

C. List of deliverables and number of days

Deliverables	Number of days	Deadline
Inception report	15 days for national consultant 5 days for international consultant	1 April 2024
Comprehensive report on national consultations and desk review	15 days for national consultant 15 days for international consultant	15 May 2024
Study visit report	15 days for national consultant 15 days for international consultant	1 August 2024
Draft regulation, instructions and other procedural documents	7 days for national consultant 7 days for international consultant	1 September 2024
Launch of National Public Works Programme	5 days for national consultant 5 days for international consultant	1 October 2024
Final report	3 days for national consultant 8 days for international consultant	15 October 2024
Total number of days	60 for national consultant 55 days for international consultant	

D. Qualification requirements

International consultant

The applicant should have a PhD in Economics or related field with a specialization in Public Employment Programmes, employment diagnostics and labour market assessments, development of comprehensive employment strategies and public policies in the area of employment generation and promotion. The applicant should have a record of related publications in academic and other specialized journals. The applicant must have at least 10 years of experience working on public employment programme design, implementation and evaluations in developing and emerging countries. Excellent English is required.

National consultant

The applicant should have an advanced degree in Economics or related field and have at least 5 years of experience working on public employment programmes in Iraq and/or the MENA region. Having a track record of publications or verifiable experience of contributing to designing, implementing and evaluating public works programmes would be an asset. Excellent Arabic and English required.

Applicants should submit a motivation letter, workplan and CV to iraq-procurement@ilo.org and tawfeeq@ilo.org by 05 February 2024. They should clarify if they wish to apply as the international consultant or national consultant.